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## Letter dated 24 March 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey to you the attached information entitled "Treaty on a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in Central Asia enters into Force" (see annex).

I would appreciate it if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly under agenda item 89.

(*Signed*) Murad **Askarov**
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uzbekistan

09-28153 (E) 060409 060409

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## Annex to the letter dated 24 March 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

## Entry into force of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia

The Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia entered into force on 21 March 2009. This important event occurred following the ratification of the Treaty by all the States parties: the Republic of Uzbekistan (10 May 2007); the Kyrgyz Republic (27 July 2007); the Republic of Tajikistan (13 January 2009); Turkmenistan (17 January 2009); and the Republic of Kazakhstan (19 February 2009). The Treaty is of unlimited duration.

The initiative to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia by all interested countries and international organizations for the benefit of every State in the region, first announced by President Islam Karimov of the Republic of Uzbekistan at the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly on 28 September 1993, has therefore become a reality. This is the first nuclear-weapon-free zone established in the northern hemisphere. It directly borders two nuclear-weapon States.

The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone occupies a special place in the process of strengthening international security. Nuclear-weapon-free zones date back to the cold war, a time when technological advances made the possibility of thermonuclear war and its consequences one of the most keenly discussed topics. Countless thematic conferences, round tables, analytical notes and simulated events resulted in a recognition on both sides of the Atlantic that there could be no expectation of survival in the event of a nuclear attack.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones became one way to limit the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to deal with past and potential future nuclear disasters, at a time when predictions were being made that nuclear safety and security in the post-cold-war era would become one of the most important challenges for many successive decades.

It is important that the expansion of nuclear-weapon-free zones is proceeding under the auspices of the United Nations. It is equally important that the United Nations is actively encouraging the inclusion of non-nuclear-weapon States in this process. Indeed, it was to this very call that the Uzbek authorities first responded by proposing the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia and, to that end, emphasizing the interconnectedness and indivisibility of global, regional and national security.

The Central Asian initiative resulted from a careful examination of international experience in the area of non-proliferation and a recognition of Central Asia's role in strengthening global security.

The Republic of Uzbekistan's initiative was fully supported by neighbouring States — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan — on the basis of the Almaty Declaration adopted in February 1997. The initiative to establish a

nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia received consistent support within the framework of General Assembly resolutions and decision, and also in documents of the Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

An important milestone in the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone was the holding on 15 September 1997 in Tashkent of an international conference entitled "Central Asia — a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone", during which positive assessments were given of the efforts of States in the region to expand areas of the globe where nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices would be permanently banned. The conference was the first outcome of the joint efforts of Central Asian States to counter external threats and challenges. As a result of the conference, a regional expert group was established to prepare a relevant treaty.

From 1997 to 2002, the group held a number of working meetings — in Geneva, Ashgabat, Tashkent, Sapporo (twice) and Samarkand — with the active assistance of the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs and experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). During the last meeting, held on 27 September 2002 in Samarkand, it was agreed that the ceremony for the signing of the Treaty would be held in Semipalatinsk. In the second half of 2002, two consultative meetings were held at United Nations Headquarters with experts from the five nuclear-weapon States (the United Kingdom, China, the Russian Federation, the United States of America and France). As a result of these meetings, significant amendments and proposals were introduced in the draft text of the Treaty.

The seventh meeting of the regional expert group was held in Tashkent from 7 to 9 February 2005. During the meeting the countries of Central Asia agreed to a common position on the text of the Treaty, taking into account the proposals and comments of the five nuclear-weapon States, IAEA and the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs.

The signature of the Treaty on 8 September 2006 was the result of many years of joint work by the States in the region, combined with the active assistance and involvement of the United Nations, IAEA and the five nuclear-weapon States (the United Kingdom, China, the Russian Federation, the United States of America and France). In this connection, it is particularly important to emphasize the support for this initiative from all Member States of the United Nations, including the nuclear-weapon States, and the role of the United Nations, which, for the first time, directly participated in the elaboration and agreement of a draft treaty.

Under the Treaty, each party undertakes not to conduct research on, develop, manufacture, stockpile or otherwise acquire, possess or have control over any nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive device. The Treaty consists of 18 articles, a Protocol and the rules of procedure to implement article 10, which includes the procedure for the holding of consultative meetings.

The process for the preparation, signature and entry into force of the Treaty demonstrated the collective and constructive determination of all five Central Asian States to ensure security, stability and peace in the region and to create the necessary conditions for the development and prosperity of their peoples. The Republic of Kazakhstan organized the ceremony for the signing of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia in Semipalatinsk; the Kyrgyz Republic

performs the depositary functions; and the first consultative meeting will be held in the Republic of Tajikistan. The desire of States and international partners to carry out the actions necessary for the entry into force of this Treaty reaffirms their commitments to strengthening regional and international peace and security, and to effective integration in the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

The practical implementation of the Uzbek President's initiative fulfils the foreign policy priorities of ensuring national security for the stable and sustainable development of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Central Asian region as a whole, and of contributing to the strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

The sustainable development of the Central Asian region depends critically on a correct understanding of the nature of existing threats and the timely identification of their sources and interrelationships. Nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction pose a particular threat. Central Asia is one of the most densely populated regions of the world, where the population lives in vulnerable conditions in every respect and where oasis settlements are already susceptible to various natural disasters.

The significance of the initiative put forward by President Islam Karimov of the Republic of Uzbekistan is explained by the increasingly important geostrategic position of Central Asia, with its abundant natural, mineral, energy, human and other resources, where the geopolitical and strategic interests of many of the largest States in the world converge.

The establishment and operation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia represent an integral part of the global nuclear security system as defined by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In practice, this means that States parties to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asian have been effectively integrated into the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

The proposal to declare the Central Asian region a nuclear-weapon-free zone is also explained by the fact that not all States of the world have as yet acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Furthermore, as President Islam Karimov of the Republic of Uzbekistan noted in his September 1997 speech in Tashkent at the international conference entitled "Central Asia — a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone", "Any political decisions and any intergovernmental acts will be worthwhile only if they are closely linked to social problems and to ensuring a decent life for people in society. The nuclear-weapon-free-zone in Central Asia is no exception. What exactly can it give people? The most important thing is that it contributes to security and sustainable development."

As United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted in his September 2006 speech to participants at the signing ceremony of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, "Individually and collectively, nuclear-weapon-free zones strengthen the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, reinforce global efforts to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world, and greatly enhance global and regional peace and security."

President Islam Karimov's initiative to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia represents a genuine contribution by States in the region to the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to the establishment of a regional security mechanism.